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SUBJECT: TRIBAL REVOLT AGAINST THE TALIBAN IN NANGAHAR,S
MAMAND VALLEY

Classified By: PRT and Sub-National Governance Director Valerie C. Fowler for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (S/NF) The Jalalabad Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) met July 23 with tribal members from Nangarhar's Mamand Valley to coordinate support for their recent uprising against the Taliban. The resistance by local members of the Shinwar tribe against Taliban insurgents represents a new development and an opportunity in the troubled border district of Achin. During the meeting, local leaders told us they intended to defend their village against a threatened insurgent counter-attack, and that they needed more weapons and ammunition. They also urged provincial officials and Coalition Forces to meet with them again to discuss a security plan to assist the villagers. The July 17 clash between locals from Bagh village in the Mamand Valley and the Taliban began as a street argument, but spiraled into a full-fledged revolt against insurgents. The resistance against the Taliban in the Mamand Valley of Nangarhar is an opportunity which the PRT and other Coalition Forces plan to exploit, in an effort to widen the gap between the local population and insurgents. End Summary.

Anti)Taliban Revolt

2. (S/REL NATO, ISAF) Twenty-five prominent members of the Rahimdad Khiel sub-tribe from southern Nangarhar's Mamand Valley met July 23 with the PRT, other Coalition Forces, and provincial and district officials to discuss recent fighting between villagers and insurgents in the strategic valley that laces through the Spin Ghar Mountains separating Afghanistan from Pakistan. The PRT called the meeting to discuss how the provincial government and Coalition Forces could better support the Shinwar tribal members in their newfound resistance. The tribal delegation was headed by Malik Niyaz Mohammad, the local patron of remote Bagh village, who has a history of tolerating and dealing with insurgents, but who led the resistance against them in fierce fighting July 17.

A Gap Opens

3. (S/REL NATO, ISAF) The sudden and unexpected resistance by local members of the Shinwar tribe against Taliban insurgents, who have been massing in the Mamand Valley in recent months, and who had thus far moved relatively freely around and through local villages, is a new development in the troubled border district of Achin. The local revolt represents what appears to be a schism between the local population and insurgents. Two villagers and at least two insurgents) including a Taliban commander) were killed in the fighting. Eleven more insurgents, including at least eight from Pakistan, were captured by locals. Eight were

turned over to Afghan authorities, but three more are still being held by villagers as bargaining chips against the 11-year-old nephew of Malik Niyaz, who was taken hostage by Taliban during the clash, Malik Niyaz told us.

Give Us Weapons

14. (S/REL NATO, ISAF) During the July 23 meeting, Malik Niyaz told the PRT, other Coalition Forces and the Governor's representative (Governor Gul Agha Sherzai has been away in Kandahar campaigning for President Karzai's re-election) that they intended to defend their village against a threatened insurgent counter-attack, and that they needed more weapons and ammunition. Note: Coalition Forces do not currently plan to directly provide the villagers with weapons. End Note.

15. (S/REL NATO, ISAF) On July 22, Taliban spokesman Qari Hamza reportedly told Pajhwok Afghan News that their forces would avenge their comrades who were killed in the fighting in and around Bagh village. Malik Niyaz told us that a local scratch force of 320 young men had taken up defensive positions in key areas around the village to protect the community. He complained that Afghan Army and Police) as well as Coalition Forces) did not respond in force and in a timely manner during the July 17 fighting. Only three police, led by the local police chief, arrived at the remote village in time to participate in the fight, he said. During the fighting, Malik Niyaz had requested though Afghan security forces that Coalition air power be dispatched to the area. The Commander of the U.S. Special Troops Battalion (STB) explained to him that confusion on the ground and the

KABUL 00002142 002 OF 002

inability to distinguish villagers from insurgents made air strikes too dangerous at the time. Malik Niyaz accepted the explanation.

16. (S/REL NATO, ISAF) Another influential local, Malik Kamin Azimi, urged provincial officials and Coalition Forces to meet with them again to discuss a security plan to assist villagers. The PRT and STB commanders, as well as the Governor's representative, agreed. The commanders of the PRT and Agri-Business Development Team (ADT) also agreed to a separate meeting to discuss possible development projects for the area, in an effort to show villagers the benefits of an effective government.

From Insult to Open War

17. (S/REL NATO, ISAF) By most accounts from those who were on the scene, local resistance against insurgents was not the result of patriotic Afghans standing up to the enemies of their government. Instead, the clash began when insurgents, who were milling around the village, insulted Malik Niyaz for hosting his nephew, an Afghan National Army (ANA) sergeant who was on leave and staying with him. Eight male members of Malik Niyaz' family responded to the insult by confronting the insurgents, who included local Taliban Commander Mullah Abdul Qayum. The insurgents opened fire, killing two of the eight locals. Villagers immediately responded, opening fire on Qayum and another insurgent. Witnesses said Abdul Qayum was wounded by gunfire, then stoned to death by villagers. Malik Niyaz told us he ordered all males in his family to attack the insurgents, and they were joined by a reported 5,000 villagers, who drove the insurgents from the area, he said.

Comment

18. (S/NF) The local uprising against the Taliban in the Mamand Valley of Nangarhar is an opportunity. Over the past eight months, the PRT's State Department Representative has been meeting regularly with maliks and other tribal leaders

from isolated mountain villages and mountain passes near the Pakistani border to establish relationships and promote the district, provincial and national government in areas that rarely see the effects of state power. The PRT's State and other representatives have also met regularly with family members of insurgents, who provide shelter, food and other assistance to anti-government forces. The PRT's goal is to convince, cajole, or scare them away from assisting the insurgents, and to help them recognize the benefits of siding with the Afghan government. The local resistance against the Taliban in the Mamand Valley appears to be spontaneous and unrelated to the PRT's outreach efforts, as family, village and tribal ties tend to outweigh national loyalty in the isolated communities along the Pakistani border. Nevertheless, the PRT, STB and ADT are working with the provincial government to exploit and widen the gap that appears to have opened between the populace and insurgents in parts of the Mamand Valley.

¶9. (S/NF) Comment Continued. After the July 23 meeting, the PRT arranged a roundtable discussion on the local affiliate of RTA television, which included Malik Niyaz and local officials describing their resistance against the Taliban in the Mamand Valley. The program was also converted to radio spots, to ensure residents in other remote parts of Nangarhar are aware of the example set by the Rahimdad Khel sub-tribe, and encourage others to follow suit. The PRT and STB also plan to coordinate closely with provincial and district security officials to organize a security plan to support the residents of the Mamand Valley against the Taliban. End Comment.

¶10. (S/NF) TF Mountain Warrior Commander Colonel Randy George has reviewed this cable.
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